

Stellaria Trio presents Pale Yellow – a program of piano trios at Brandon Music June 15th.

About the program

Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) is often referred to as ‘the Father of Classicism’ – his very early works were rooted in the late baroque period but his style evolved steadily and formed the basis for the classical period epitomised by Mozart and his contemporaries.

The Piano Trio No. 45 in E flat major is one of three comprising the very last piano trios he composed (at the age of 65); they were dedicated to Therese Jansen Bartolozzi, a German pianist who Haydn met when they were both living in London. It is in three movements. Haydn composed the trio with a solid knowledge of what the piano of his day could accomplish as the piano writing keeps to separate lines instead of chordal passages. He blends the piano and strings into a pleasant and expressive whole. The first movement has elements of sonata form and theme and variation – an expertly crafted movement. The second movement is a very short ‘Innocent andantino’ of a lighter shade, and is followed by the finale, a landler (German dance in triple meter). Haydn was fond of rapid finales, and this movement moves at a brisk pace. There are hints of the gypsy music he no doubt heard at Eszterháza, the estate in Hungary where he was employed by Prince Nikolaus Esterházy for many years. The movement ends in high spirits.

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) was a master of high Romanticism and his major, most ‘serious’ works are dramatic and rich and influenced many of the composers of the early 20th century who extended the Romantic style and created the first modernism.

The Piano Trio in C major, Op. 87 was the second of Brahms’s essays in the genre, written over a period of two years in the early 1880s – a time when he was at the height of his creative powers and still blessed with burgeoning energy. When he began this work he was midway between completing his second and third symphonies, and also produced the massive Piano Concerto No. 2. The Trio, whilst of a typical Romantic heroic character, is tightly packed into its duration of under 30 minutes and employs sumptuous rich-textured piano writing and noble, triumphant soaring themes

Jennifer Higdon (b.1962) is one of America’s most accomplished composers of today. She was born in Brooklyn and raised in Atlanta and Tennessee and has won global acclaim for her expert compositions as well as her work as a conductor, including a Pulitzer Prize (2010) for her Violin Concerto.

The Piano Trio, written in 2003, was commissioned by the Bravo! Vail Valley Music Festival in Colorado. Its subtitles ‘Pale Yellow’ for the first movement and ‘Fiery Red’ for the second, reflect the composer’s fascination with the connection between painting and music, and the ability many people have to relate colors with sounds. We will hear the first movement, *Pale Yellow*, which evokes a pastoral mood, maybe redolent of the spreading golden light at sunrise.

About the Performers

Letitia Quante started violin with the Suzuki method. She studied with David Einfeldt at Hartt Music School and performed in Australia, Japan, Belgium, France, and Alice Tully and Carnegie Halls in New York. At age 11 she entered Juilliard pre-college, studying with Louise Behrend. She also minored in conducting until she graduated at age 15. She worked as a violinist, was apprentice conductor to the NY Youth Symphony, and completed her Suzuki teacher training at School for Strings. Resuming her studies at the Peabody Conservatory, Letitia completed her BMA with full scholarship, studying with Victor Danchenko. While living in Maryland, she played principal with Mid-Atlantic Symphony and assistant concertmaster with Lancaster Symphony, and concertized both as a soloist and chamber musician with other ensembles in Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York. She has performed with diverse musicians such as Mikhail Kopelman, Leon Fleisher, Eugene Drucker, Phil Setzer, Sarah Chang, Kanye West, Bajofondo, and Natalia Lafourcade. She has also performed with Singapore Symphony, New World Symphony, Philharmonic Orchestra of the Americas, and the Baltimore Chamber Orchestra. Since moving to Vermont in 2012, Letitia plays with the Vermont Symphony Orchestra, Burlington Chamber Orchestra, Middlebury Opera, Handel Society at

Dartmouth, Vermont Contemporary Ensemble, and Vermont Virtuosi. Letitia is playing on an 1840 Jean-Baptiste Vuillaume on generous loan from Vermont Violins.

John Dunlop has been performing in the Northeast for over twenty-five years as Principal cellist with the Vermont Symphony, Burlington Chamber Orchestra, Opera Company of Middlebury, Opera North, Vermont Mozart Festival, Vermont Virtuosi and the Green Mountain Opera Festival. He has performed as soloist with both the VSO and BCO, as well as many chamber music performances with notable area musicians. John is also the cellist with the fledgling new music ensemble TURN, which features many of the most interesting young composers of our time.

He studied under Richard Kapuscinski at Oberlin Conservatory and Bonnie Hampton at the San Francisco Conservatory, and has played in master classes for Yo Yo Ma, Jerry Grossman, Steve Doane and others. John has also composed and recorded several award-winning film soundtracks for short films, including a documentary on childhood hunger in Vermont, wherein he called on his skills as a guitarist and bouzouki player in addition to cello. He has played with Bernadette Peters, Lyle Lovett, Trey Anastasio, and Phish. In addition to his teaching at Dartmouth, John teaches privately in Richmond, Vermont.

A native of Long Lake, NY, pianist **Claire Black** resides in Charlotte, VT. Praised as “a fine pianist with substantial, crystal-clear technique, plenty of power, yet with a sensitive musicality and a penchant for lyricism” (Jim Lowe, Times Argus), Claire is an active performer of classical music in solo and collaborative settings, and has presented her programs throughout North America. Claire's deep interest in and commitment to chamber music synergize with her abundant experience, including many years of performance tours with the Cialde Quintet and with her cello-piano Elegua Duo. Her current chamber music endeavors include concerts with the Stellaria Trio and Vermont Virtuosi. She also freelances as an accompanist for vocal and instrumental soloists and for the Burlington Choral Society. She is also principal pianist for Barn Opera in Brandon, Vermont. Before moving to Vermont, Claire spent eight years in Cleveland, OH. There, she worked as a staff accompanist at Baldwin Wallace University and trained at the Cleveland Institute of Music (CIM). She received a Master of Music degree in piano performance under the tutelage of Margarita Shevchenko.

Claire is an avid educator, maintaining a substantial private studio of players at all levels. She previously taught at the Oberlin Community Music School and at CIM's Summer Sonata festival for young pianists. She also works in several administrative capacities, serving on the Vermont Music Teachers Association board as Competitive Auditions Chair, and as Bookings Coordinator for the Cathedral Arts Series in Burlington.